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RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0965
RUEHRG/AMCONSUL RECIFE 8688
RUEHRI/AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO 6861
RUEHSO/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO 3046
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRASILIA 001486

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL ETRD PARM PHUM BR KN ZO
SUBJECT: BRAZIL WILL OPEN AN EMBASSY IN PYONGYANG

Classified By: Political Counselor Stephen Liston, reasons 1.4 b and d

¶11. (C) Summary. Brazil will open an embassy in Pyongyang next year, and has already selected an experienced diplomat as ambassador, an Itamaraty official told poloff on November 14. Downplaying the opening's significance, the diplomat said the timing was "spontaneous" but fulfills a long-standing commitment, and Brazil's agenda with North Korea can be expected to remain "minimal," although Brazil hopes to increase mineral ore exports. Brazil consulted with the Republic of Korea in 2003 about its relations with Pyongyang, and they do not have any concerns, the diplomat said. Brazil intends to have a minimal but positive role in region, and is not interested in nuclear or military cooperation with the DPRK. The opening of an embassy in North Korea should be seen within the context of President Lula's broader foreign policy emphasis on South-South relationships, which has led Brazil to open a large number of one- and two-diplomat posts in the developing world. End summary.

Timing Was "Spontaneous" But Commitment Was Longstanding

¶12. (C) Brazil will open an embassy in Pyongyang in the first half of 2009, and has selected an experienced diplomat to be ambassador, according to First Secretary Ricardo Portugal, Korea desk officer at the Brazilian the Ministry of External Relations ("Itamaraty"), who said he could not reveal the ambassador-designate's identity. Portugal said the exact timing of the decision was "spontaneous," but fulfills a longstanding Brazilian commitment to open an embassy in Pyongyang dating from the establishment of bilateral relations in 2001. Brazil decided about a year ago to open the Pyongyang embassy, but the GOB announced it only last September 30 in the Diario Oficial, Portugal said. Asked whether the timing was related to the U.S. decision to remove DPRK from the state sponsors of terrorism list, Portugal said it was not, but the USG decision "was a demonstration that the Brazilian decision to open an embassy now was correct." In addition, he said, in Brazil's view the six-party talks have been going well and there has recently been a relaxatin in regional relations. Portugal said Brazil cosulted with Republic of Korea officials in 2003 efore the first senior Brazilian visit to North orea and they did not have any concerns.

Brazilian Goals

¶13. (C) Brazil an North Korea have a "minimal" relationship

with little trade and a "superficial" political relationship, and Brazil will keep its role in the regional affairs of northeastern Asia "minimal," Portugal said. The chief utility of good relations with the DPRK, he said, is its support in multilateral forums such as the UN, especially for Brazil's top foreign policy goal of a permanent UNSC seat. Brazil also hopes to increase mineral ore exports to the DPRK. Another area Brazil hopes to develop is science and technology cooperation such as cooperative agreements in agricultural technology.

Brazil Has No Nuclear or Military Interest, Supports UN Non-Proliferation Position

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¶4. (C) Portugal refuted a press report (*O Estado de São Paulo*, Oct. 27, 2008, p. A5) that Brazil seeks nuclear cooperation or exchange with the DPRK, nor does Brazil have any interest in military cooperation or exchanges with North Korea. He also said the article's claim that Brazil expects to help in a governmental transition in the DPRK was completely untrue. Brazil adheres to UN positions on non-proliferation, is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and favors the denuclearization of North Korea, Portugal said, adding that Brazil's position on the Korean peninsula is "similar to China's." Brazil's positions on North Korean human rights violations have not changed and Brazil has consistently voted for UN human rights resolutions on North Korea, Portugal concluded.

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Young Relationship, Minimal Agenda

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¶5. (C) Brazil's official relationship with the DPRK dates to 2001, when diplomatic relations were established, but senior contacts have been infrequent. North Korea has had an embassy in Brasilia since at least February 2004, and the current DPRK ambassador has been in Brasilia since 2005. In 2003 a senior Brazilian diplomat, Ambassador Affonso Celso de Ouro Preto visited Pyongyang, and two years elapsed before the next senior Brazilian visit to Pyongyang, when Luiz Augusto Castro Neves, the Brazilian Ambassador to China, paid a call in 2005. In March 2008, Itamaraty Under Secretary Roberto Jaguaribe met with the North Koreans in Pyongyang. Portugal noted that Brazil's 2003 contacts with the DPRK occurred when the USG also had more contacts with North Korea, including Secretary Madeleine Albright's visit to Pyongyang. He said Brazil and the DPRK signed a "very generic" Economic-Commercial MOU in 2003 but it was not in effect and Brazil had not ratified it because the Civilian Household in the Presidential Palace "had some problems with it." The GOB recently sent it to the Congress for ratification, he noted. Portugal emphasized that Brazil has a minimal agenda with the DPRK, will play a minimal role in regional affairs, and will maintain a "positive attitude" in the region.

¶6. (C) Comment: The opening of an embassy in North Korea should be seen within the context of President Lula's broader foreign policy emphasis on South-South relationships. This has involved efforts both to strengthen relationships with major players like China, India, South Africa, and Iran, and to broaden relationships beyond the traditional Latin American and Lusophone countries to include a greater number of African, Asian, and Middle Eastern countries. This latter objective, which has led Brazil to open a large number of one- and two-diplomat posts in the developing world, has been the subject of debate among Brazil's foreign policy elite, many of whom question the value of dispersing Brazil's limited diplomatic resources in countries in which Brazil has minimal interests. End comment.

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